

ABSTRACT

A lightweight and homogeneous optical element exhibiting favorably weak birefringence and hygroscopicity as well as superior productivity and producing minimal chromatic aberrations is formed by using an organic-inorganic composite material having both the properties of a glass material and those of a plastic material. The optical element has at least one entrance refracting surface and at least one exit refracting surface. The optical element is formed from an organic-inorganic composite material having an inorganic phase dispersed in the three-dimensional network (matrix) of an organic phase.